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SOCIAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN.

WHAT is meant by a child's social needs? It is his need to learn to co-operate with others, in work and in play, in a manner best fitted for his and his associates' highest development. In these days of social unrest and failure to recognize one's obligation to his neighbor, we all agree that there can be no part of a child's education that is more important. These social needs should be recognized in the school and in the home, and, it would be logical and natural to add, in the church. But for the purposes of this paper the school and the home centers only will be considered. Social organization takes place naturally when there is something to do. In the words of one of the leading educators, "when occupations are made the articulating centers" of home life and of school life, the social nature of the child grows and expands. Some educators are telling us how this can be accomplished in schools. The school is not a place for the acquisition of knowledge only. It is where the social instinct is recognized, while all of the powers of the body, mind, and soul are unfolding and developing, under wise guidance. In order to fully accomplish this, the life of the school and home must supplement each other. Were the schools social centers, our parents and teachers would meet on common ground for the furtherance of a better social spirit among all sorts and conditions of children.

How this can be accomplished in the home is only now beginning to occupy the attention of educators and parents alike. Professor Henderson, in *Education and the Larger Life*, after finding that the public schools are in session for less than one-half of the year and for less than one-fourth of the day, urges the importance of instructing the home on the question of its larger social duties. He says:

It may be that the social purpose is divided between the school and the home, giving seven-eighths of the total year to the home. If this large share belong properly to the home, it would seem that by far the more important part of education consists in instructing the home, and that a true normal

school ought to devote seven-eighths of its time to the enlightenment of fathers and mothers, and one-eighth to the narrower pedagogy of the school. But this is not done, and, as we all know, even in the schools themselves, the question of parenthood and its tremendous social duties is hardly touched upon at all. That is to say, we leave this immense slice of the educational process quite unprovided for. Now, this social failure of the home [and we might well add, of the school] is so manifest, and the recognition of it so widespread, that on all sides one sees the beginning of a movement to provide rational occupation for children, during at least, a part of their large holiday time. One hears of Saturday morning classes in woodwork, or sewing, or cooking, or gymnastics, outings in the country, summer camps for boys, and vacation schools.

The recognition of these social needs means the recognition of proper activities. In the olden time, when the household was the center about which all forms of industrial occupations clustered, there was plenty to occupy the time of the children of the family. Now that the industrial occupations have largely passed out of the home, there is great need to recognize the lack of proper home interests for children. Our great material prosperity has destroyed the simplicity of our lives. The complex organization of the present household overlooks the help that the boys and girls in the family might furnish. Such work, when the home and the school are properly correlated, can be made educative and developing. While, in a sense, the work is not as vital as in the old days when the household and neighborhood systems prevailed, still a household can be conducted upon scientific and ethical principles, so that the children can receive a valuable training and education, physically, intellectually, and morally. This, however, means that we must simplify our own and our children's lives. It means that the children must co-operate actively in the work and the life of the home, and that the parents must participate rather than direct. The strenuous demands of the outside world upon the members of the family often lose to it that tranquillity which must exist for the fructifying of its highest social life. Owing to the tendency of our civilization to specialize, many most vital things have passed out of the home. And these must be restored; otherwise the home is in danger.

Children need other interests; they need play, social inter-

course with their mates. This interest should be understood and directed by the combined judgment of the teacher and parent. In some neighborhoods this is well met by the schools, with their public playgrounds, under the supervision of specialists. In other neighborhoods this want is supplied by the home. The children gather in a vacant lot or back yard, and we see games of tennis, football, baseball, basket-ball, cave-building, athletic sports, skating, and tobogganing. In the winter, appropriate social gatherings, which preserve the spirit of simplicity and naturalness, occur at the homes. But when this life has been most harmonious and most conducive to a proper social spirit, I have observed that some guiding hand has been at the helm, some mother with better insight into her children's wants has directed the social life, although so skilfully that the children have not even suspected it.

But there should be a true balance of these interests; neither play nor work should predominate. The interests about the home and the school should be properly proportioned. Social life is hampered by the lack of correlation between the different centers about which interests should cluster. It is complicated by the dissipation in many directions of these interests, which should concentrate about definite centers.

Educators and parents should come together and study these questions. An effort was made in this direction in connection with the Parents' Association of the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago. About ten years ago, when the school was first established, some of the parents met for the purpose of considering the best way of maintaining the school and to come to a better understanding of its principles. An association, which became an important factor in the history of the school, grew out of these meetings. While Dr. Dewey co-operated in every way and was indirectly its inspiration, he left it to grow entirely through its own efforts.

At first the work was done through the general meetings. These were attended by the mothers. Later these meetings were held in the evening, so that the fathers might join. The teachers explained their work, and different professors at the University discussed educational questions. The parents were encouraged

to take part in the discussions. Some of these meetings were entirely social in their character. As the community feeling about the school grew, it became plain that the usefulness of the association could be increased by committee work.

There was a desire on the part of many parents to study more thoroughly educational questions and the work of leading educators. So the educational committee arranged for courses of lectures. Dr. Dewey, Mrs. Young, and Professor Tufts gave these at the University for the benefit of all who were interested in the school. This committee co-operated with the teachers in securing the best expression of Dr. Dewey's thought in the actual conduct of the school.

The social committee met and discussed the social needs of the boys and girls, at the same time striving to bring all of the mothers together socially. Among other things, we agreed that no sex line should be recognized; that the girls should be simply dressed; that there should be no idle roaming about the streets or idle visiting; that the social gatherings, which we entirely approved of should be most simple. For the younger children we encouraged sleigh rides, picnics, or afternoon parties. For the older ones we stood for early hours and plain dressing. And always we discouraged too frequent festivities of this sort. We arranged with a young University man who had the true spirit of play to encourage plenty of activity of the right sort, among the boys, during noon time and for a time after school. We arranged with the young woman director of the gymnasium to initiate the girls into games out of school. The teachers met with us. Then each member of the committee acted as chairman of a subcommittee and called that committee together, spreading the principles for which the main committee stood. These committees met informally at the homes of the members. In this way the parents became acquainted. We came to know the needs of our friends' children, and they of ours, and I think we were of mutual assistance. In this way the school was brought into the closest touch with all the families represented in it, and furnished a unique instance of the whole neighborhood being a part of it, so that this community was associated with the methods, aims,

and ambitions of the school in a way that made it an uplifting force, not only to its pupils, but to a large constituency. This committee hoped to arrange for discussions upon such subjects as "Proper Recreation for Children," "Social Needs During Adolescence," "Need of Public Playgrounds," "Value of Neighborhood Director of Games," "Athletics," "Fraternities," "Out-of-Door Life in Cities."

The purpose of the house committee was not so definitely recognized. It began to be clear, however, that this committee might be of great value. It could co-operate with the school in correlating the work of the home and of the school. During the school period, and especially in the case of the older boys and girls, the school encroaches very much upon the home. During the long vacation time it is difficult for the home to arrange properly for the children. The manual training, cooking, and sewing taught in the school are more often never practiced in the home. The organization of the household and the demands of the school upon the strength and time of the children prevent this. Appropriate subjects for lectures and discussion would be: "Scientific Organization of the Household," "How Can Home Life and School Life Be Correlated?" "Children's Home Duties," "Domestic Science."

We were strenuous in our efforts to infuse into the little community which grew about this school simplicity in thought and in action, and I think we were rewarded by seeing our boys and girls reach the ages of sixteen and seventeen natural and wholesome. But we did not have our own children only in mind. We hoped that the learning of a university, that rare pedagogical insight, combined with the earnest watchfulness and experience of the teachers and parents, might throw light upon what the social life of children of all communities, and especially of less favored communities, should be. We hoped that all children might be helped to the rich inheritance of what should be theirs, by the perfect growth of all their powers.

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